



# Hanford Site Solid (*Radioactive and Hazardous*) Waste Program

# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

## F A C T S H E E T

Richland, Washington

## National Environmental Policy Act

United States Department of Energy

### *Environmental Impact Statement*

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) for major Federal actions that may significantly affect the quality of the environment. Under NEPA, the term “environment” encompasses the natural and physical environment (air, water, geography, and geology) as well as the relationship of people with that environment (health and safety, jobs, housing, schools, transportation, cultural resources, noise, and aesthetics). The goal of Congress in enacting NEPA was to ensure that Federal agencies consider the potential environmental impacts of their proposed actions before deciding on a course of action.

### *The NEPA Process*

An EIS is prepared pursuant to the procedural requirements established by the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for all Federal agencies and also to the specific regulations of individual agencies. There are various levels of NEPA assessments. If the proposed action will have significant impacts on the environment, NEPA outlines a detailed process for preparing an EIS. If the significance of potential impacts is unknown, a less detailed study or an environmental assessment (EA) is prepared. An EA either determines the need for an EIS or results in a *finding of no significant impact* (FONSI). A programmatic EIS addresses national, program-wide alternatives rather than site-specific actions and is prepared whenever a Federal agency is considering a broad-scope environmental analysis of a program or policy, such as conducting new research, establishing regulations, or effectively managing weapons-usable fissile materials.

The major steps in the DOE NEPA process for preparing an EIS are as follows: gathering input from Federal agencies, states, local governments, Native American tribes, and other stakeholders; preparing the draft EIS; receiving and responding to public comments on the draft EIS; and preparing the final EIS. The EIS does not make any decisions; rather, it is one tool decision makers must use to make informed decisions.

### **Notice of Intent and Scoping Process**

As the first step in preparing an EIS, a Federal agency issues a notice of intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* to inform the public that a study will be done. The NOI describes the proposed action the agency is considering, provides information on issues and potential impacts, and invites comments and suggestions on the scope of the EIS. In the process known as *Scoping*, the public can provide comments directly to the Federal agency on the scope of the EIS and can help to determine the alternatives, issues, and environmental impacts to be analyzed in the EIS. DOE regulations require that at least one public meeting be held to facilitate the collection of public input.

### **Draft EIS**

The draft EIS is the next step in the NEPA process. It describes, analyzes, and compares the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives that accomplish the proposed action. It also provides information on the methodologies and assumptions used for the analyses. If one or more preferred alternatives exist at this stage of the NEPA process, they will be identified in the draft EIS. NEPA requires a minimum 45-day period for public comment after the draft EIS is issued.

### **Final EIS and Record of Decision**

After the public comment period on the draft EIS is completed, the Federal agency issues a final EIS that responds to oral and written comments received during the public review of the draft. The agency is now prepared to make an informed decision. After a 30-day waiting period, the agency can issue a Record of Decision (ROD), which is published in the *Federal Register*. The ROD may include consideration of other decision factors such as costs, technical feasibility, agency statutory mission, or national objectives. No action is taken until the decision has been made public.

The NEPA process does not dictate that an agency select the most environmentally beneficial alternative, nor does it dictate that the agency select the least expensive. The purpose of the process is to ensure that necessary and accurate environmental studies are done, that they are done with public involvement, and that public officials, like those at DOE, make decisions based on an understanding of environmental consequences.

### ***You are Vital to the Process***

Public input in the NEPA process is emphasized early in the scoping phase and during public comment periods. Concerns raised during public scoping help shape the issues addressed in the EIS. Comments received during comment periods are addressed directly and are included in the final document. Public involvement opportunities throughout the NEPA process are announced in the *Federal Register*, and may also be advertised in local newspapers and through public service announcements.

## ***Focus of the Hanford Site Solid (Radioactive and Hazardous) Waste Program EIS***

The DOE Solid Waste Program at Hanford is preparing an EIS (SW-EIS) to evaluate alternatives for management of the Solid Waste Program's radioactive and hazardous wastes generated at the Hanford Site, or that which is received from offsite generators. The specific waste types to be considered include: low-level radioactive waste (LLW), mixed low-level radioactive and hazardous waste (MLLW), transuranic radioactive and mixed waste (TRU), hazardous waste (HW), and contaminated equipment and materials for reuse, recycle, or disposal. The SW-EIS will update NEPA coverage for ongoing activities, implement programmatic records of decision (RODs) that result from the Final Waste Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (WM-PEIS, DOE/EIS-0200-F), and facilitate site- and program-specific decisions on the future operation of its waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities. Specifically, the following table identifies possible DOE decisions that would result from the analysis contained in the SW-EIS:

<b>Waste Type</b>	<b>Location and Types of Treatment Facilities Needed</b>	<b>Methods and Location for Interim Storage</b>	<b>Methods and Location for Final Disposition</b>
LLW	Determine treatment methods, including those for greater than category 3 (GTC3) wastes. Identify treatment facility (onsite or offsite).	Determine interim management methods and locations for GTC3 waste.	Determine need for expansion & methods for closure of LLBG, subject to future WM-PEIS ROD.
MLLW	Determine methods for waste and leachate treatment. Identify treatment facility, including possible use of onsite & offsite facilities (commercial or DOE).	Determine location and type of interim storage, if needed.	Determine need for expansion & method for closure of MLLW trenches. Identify new or existing facilities that may be needed for disposal of some wastes, subject to future WM-PEIS ROD.
TRU	Determine whether to retrieve and characterize post-1970 TRU. Identify treatment facilities and methods for some wastes.	Determine location and type of interim storage.	Identify wastes (if any) that could be disposed in place. DOE has decided to dispose of other TRU at WIPP .
HW	Determine treatment methods and locations (onsite or offsite).	Determine whether there are alternate uses for existing HW facilities, or decide to deactivate.	Identify necessary onsite or offsite disposal facilities.
Contaminated Equipment	Decide whether to continue decontamination activities at T Plant, or to transition the facility to other uses or deactivate. Identify other technologies that could be used for decontamination.	N/A - Equipment would be returned to use, recycled, or disposed as waste.	N/A - If equipment is disposed, it would be dispositioned according to waste type.

### **For More Information Contact:**

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